

Annual Evaluation of the Family Support Subsidy Program for FY 2012

Background:

The Family Support Subsidy (FSS) program provides a monthly payment to help families with the cost of raising a child with a developmental disability. The program began in 1987. Parents of children with disabilities were very active in getting state and federal policy makers to look at how they could divert some of the funds going to institutional care. Families with severely disabled children wanted to raise their children at home but were met with a lot of resistance and policy barriers when they tried to get home-based support. The FSS program helped these families to keep their children at home.

Ending the Family Support Subsidy:

The legislature directed DHS to stop accepting new applicants for the Family Support Subsidy effective July 1, 2010. This decision was based on the determination that since the time when the Family Support Subsidy began there has been a significant expansion of the Medicaid Home and Community Based Waiver program. Many of the needs that were intended to be addressed by the Family Support Subsidy would be more adequately funded by the Medicaid Waiver program. Medicaid has the additional benefit of a federal match which makes the state funds reach more eligible children. Families report that they use the Family Support Subsidy to pay for respite care, recreational activities, special foods, parent training, transportation, adaptive equipment and home modifications. The number of children in the Family Support Subsidy will continue to decline until the all the children who are currently in the program turn 18.

Family Support Subsidy Survey Results:

The great majority of families expressed satisfaction with the Family Support Subsidy program for FY11. Of the families who renewed the Family Support Subsidy for the next year, 98% of those who responded to the survey question expressed satisfaction with the program. None of those responding indicated dissatisfaction with the program.

Question: How would you rate your satisfaction with the Family Support Subsidy program?			
Possible Answers	# of responses	Percent of total	Percent of those who responded
Satisfied	169	90%	98%
Neutral	4	2%	2%
Dissatisfied	0	NA	NA
Did not answer	14	8%	NA
TOTALS	187	100%	100%

The top five ways in which the families used the subsidy were:

1. Transportation
2. Recreation (specialized)
3. Respite Care
4. Special Foods
5. Adaptive Equipment

Other ways in which the families used the subsidy monies included parent training, insurance, counseling and home modifications.

The Children at Home Program (CAH):

The CAH program also provides cash assistance to families of children with developmental disabilities, however funds are provided on an as needed basis. The funds are distributed through agencies who are awarded CAH contracts. The funds help families with expenses not covered by other programs or during emergencies when it would take too long to apply for assistance through other means. Decisions on how to distribute funding is made with the assistance of local parent councils. Families use CAH funds to pay for respite, summer camps, adaptive equipment, educational software, home modifications, special diets and special training.

Current status of the CAH program:

The Children at Home program currently covers 20 counties with 8 contracts.

Number of Children Served in the FSS and CAH Programs:

Fiscal Year	2010	2011	2012	2013-Projected
Children in FSS	333	297	250	227
Children in CAH	600	467	826	800

Recommendations:

The Comprehensive Family Support Council has recommended that DHS continue to expand the CAH program as the FSS program is being reduced. The FSS program met a vital need while waivers were being introduced and expanded. However, today it serves essentially the same population but has funds to enroll less than 10% of children on the waiver program. CAH is very successful in helping more families by connecting them with local and state programs. The CAH program also benefits parents through the formation of local parent councils that serve as conduits for parents to have a voice in implementing services in their community.

DHS will request to increase the number of contracts by 2 in SFY2014 and by 1 in SFY2015. This would allow the program to expand into 2-4 additional counties. Funding for this expansion will come from the Comprehensive Family Support Subsidy dollars freed up by the children who have aged out of the Family Support Subsidy.

DHS has recommended that the Comprehensive Family Support Council be eliminated. This council served to help determine funding for the Family Support Subsidy. Beginning in FY12, the Family Support Subsidy will operate off a scripted formula for increasing yearly payment amounts for families. This combined with the elimination of the program when the last, current child reaches 18 will eliminate the need for a council. The Children at Home program has local councils which attend to each individual program.

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